

Commissioner Fish and Water Bureau staff discuss surplus property policy

MULTNOMAH NOTEBOOK

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

Over 60 residents, community activists, and government officials attended the Sept. 9 meeting of the Multnomah Neighborhood Association.

City Commissioner Nick Fish, Water Bureau director David Shaff, and other city folks were on hand to discuss the new city policy on surplus property.

"We sold the Water House—a project launched by Commissioner (Randy) Leonard in 2009—to demonstrate the benefits of water-efficient homes. We also curbed water rates to below five percent," Fish said. "Tualatin's rate is 12 percent."

"We also created a statewide independent advocacy group to monitor water bureau actions."

"The Freeman Water Tank was the catalyst," Fish went on. "I wasn't satisfied with the current policy. I was obliged to honor the contract." *Editor's Note: For background, see letters and story in the November 2013 edition of The Post.*

Fish went on to say that in the future, the Water Bureau will not advertise on Craigslist, ask a fair value price, have no advertising or signs, and notify the neighborhood and business associations.

"We appreciated the public's input, but let's test drive the revamped policy first," Fish said.

Fish complimented the group for "turning lemons to lemonade."

Questions came next. Neighbors questioned everything from pending lawsuits against Fish and the Water Bureau, Superfunds, and gouging rate payers for unrelated projects.

"It is illegal to use funds from every bureau to help pay for water services," Shaff explained.

"Was it appropriate to charge ratepayers money to move pipes?" a Multnomah resident asked.

"Yes, it was fine," Shaff answered. "But we need to shift the cost of the superfund to taxpayers, not the water rate payers."

Shaff explained the new surplus property policy.

"First of all, all bureaus will be notified. The property is no longer needed and will ask if four or five other bureaus want to purchase the land."

After ten days, the property sale will be put into writing, then public notice to all including Metro, the county, and state.

"It will then be listed on the city's website, and not buried, hard to find," the director continued to explain.

The property will then be listed with a sign for intent to sell for at least a minimum of 45 days. Community newspapers would be utilized, and then an emergency ordinance will be enacted, after a second hearing, by the city council.

If the council says yes, then the property will be listed on the NMLS (Nationwide Mortgages Licensing System and Registry) and the city



Commissioner Nick Fish discussed the city's new surplus property policy at the Multnomah Neighborhood Association meeting on Sept. 9. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)

will not accept any offers for 30 days.

Randy Bonella said that 30 days is not very long since business and neighborhood associations meet only once a month.

"Sixty days is much better," Bonella said.

"Ask the (City) Auditor to audit the property," someone else suggested.

"We're committed to doing better," Fish conceded. "We're going to fine tune this model and export it to all bureaus. This will be a consistent policy that everyone can use."

Writer April Henry

(Continued from Page 5)

Unlike some writers, who agonize before a blank computer screen, Henry said she "likes writing," and rarely has writer's block.

As for her inspiration? Henry keeps a huge file of potential book topics. She thinks life itself is full of great ideas. "Don't you think the news is filled with stories?" she said, smiling.

When asked how her writing has grown since she finished her first book, she didn't hesitate. "Oh, I can write a book in a really short amount of time and have it be good."

Henry had two new books come out last summer. A young adult mystery, "Body in the Woods," for which she accompanied search and rescue teams for background research, and "Deadly Business," co-written with Lis Wiehl, a former reporter and federal prosecutor.

Henry doesn't get many rejections anymore. But she will never forget her determination to achieve her childhood dream.

In fact, her advice for would-be authors is pretty simple: Don't give up. "I think tenacity is more important than talent." Fortunately for Henry, she has an abundance of both.

April Henry has a wonderful website where you can contact her, read about her books and more. Visit www.aprilhenrymysteries.com.

If you took photos of Southwest Sunday Parkways on Sept. 28, please email high resolution images to ThePost.news@multnomahpost.com. Be sure to include contact information so we can credit you accordingly. We will include photos in the next edition. Thanks!

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